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ABSTRACT

This paper is a narrative drawn from a 6-year study of two female elementary school teachers as they are learning to teach literacy. The teachers were part of a larger longitudinal investigation on learning to teach which began with their preservice teacher programs at a research university on the west coast. This report summarizes data collected in both classrooms during a fifth year study. The stories which emerge from the data suggest that program emphasis--a cognitive understanding of both popular and research-based approaches to literacy instruction--was insufficient for teaching multi-ethnic children in urban classrooms. Rather, teachers' relational knowing stands out in the narrative. Factors which supported these teachers' knowing through relationship included opportunities for ongoing conversation while learning to teach, a passionate belief in themselves and their children as knowledge creators and evaluators, a willingness to create eclectic approaches to literacy characterized by relational integrity, and a propensity to look critically at both their children and themselves in relationship to evaluate the results. Several examples of children's work are appended. (Author)

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BY CHART AND CHANCE AND PASSION: TWO WOMEN'S STORIES OF LEARNING TO TEACH LITERACY IN URBAN SETTINGS THROUGH RELATIONAL KNOWING

Sandra Hollingsworth, Mary Dybdahl,
and Leslie Turner Minarik

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

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Abstract

This paper is a narrative drawn from a six-year study of two female elementary school teachers as they are learning to teach literacy. The teachers were part of a larger longitudinal investigation on learning to teach which began with their preservice teacher education programs at a research university on the west coast. This report summarizes data collected in both classrooms during the fifth study year. The stories which emerge from the data suggest that program emphasis--a cognitive understanding of both the popular and research-based approaches to literacy instruction--was insufficient for teaching multi-ethnic children in urban classrooms. Rather, teachers' relational knowing stands out in the narrative. Factors which supported these teachers' knowing through relationship included opportunities for on-going conversation while learning to teach, a passionate belief in themselves and their children as knowledge creators and evaluators, a willingness to create eclectic approaches to literacy characterized by relational integrity, and a propensity to look critically at both their children and themselves in relationship to evaluate the results.

BY CHART AND CHANCE AND PASSION: TWO WOMEN'S STORIES OF LEARNING TO TEACH LITERACY IN URBAN SETTINGS THROUGH RELATIONAL KNOWING[1]

Sandra Hollingsworth, Mary Dybdahl, and Leslie Turner Minarik[2]

Navigating by chart and chance and passion
I will know the shape of the mountains of freedom, I will know (Piercy, 1987)

Learning to teach children is a personal and emotional process, perhaps as much as it is a cognitive and rational affair. The relational and continuous proximity between teacher and child, particularly in the elementary classroom, seems to nurture this emotional development. The stories reported in this paper, originally told by two women elementary teachers in the early years of their careers, will not only illustrate the passion involved in learning to teach but argue for the necessity of personal and relational development as a primary way of knowing about teaching. The stories will suggest that these teachers' general mode of teacher preparation, growing out of research which emphasized objective and distanced knowing, left them somewhat surprised, confused, and unprepared. Worse, trying to implement a curriculum based primarily on cognitive and technical knowledge of teaching in classrooms where the experience of joyous learning often occurred through social and relational interaction, set up both teachers and children for failure. They lacked an explication of and support for the very ways of knowing which would give them the freedom to teach and learn successfully. The stories which describe their struggles in learning to teach are reported elsewhere (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 1991; Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, Lidstone, et al., 1991; Hollingsworth & Minarik, 1991; Hollingsworth, Minarik, & Teel, in press). This paper represents narratives of their successes.

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[1]Paper presented to the Research Colloquium of the Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University.

[2]Sandra Hollingsworth, an assistant professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher with the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, working on the Students' Response to Literature Project. Mary Dybdahl is a second-grade teacher at Edna Weidemann Elementary School in Vallejo, California. Leslie Turner Minarik is a second-grade teacher at Highland Elementary School in Richmond, California. The authors would like to thank Karen Teel, a teacher, friend, and research associate in the Bay Area, for her constant support in collecting and helping them to understand these data. They would also like to extend their appreciation to Patricia Noell, at Michigan State University, for the careful transcription which made this paper possible.

The central characters in the stories are Mary Dybdahl and Leslie Minarik. Leslie teaches second grade, and Mary has a third/fourth combination class. Though they work in different school districts, both of these middle-class professional teachers voluntarily took jobs in the lower class environments of urban schools. Mary and Leslie are part of a larger longitudinal study on learning to teach which began with their preservice teacher education programs at a research university on the west coast of the United States (see Hollingsworth, 1989, for an example of Leslie's program). An important part of our research agenda to chart their learning to teach involved monthly social and conversational dinners. Leslie and Mary came together, with several other members of their teacher education programs, for support and validation of the teaching situations in which they found themselves.

The need for Mary's and Leslie's stories is clear. There a growing demand for teachers in urban environments, yet we know little about teachers' learning to provide equal opportunities for all of their students (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). There is also a critical need for studies which articulate not what teachers know or think, but how meanings are constructed in classrooms (Doyle, 1990). Finally, we know much about the importance of student relationships for classroom learning (Mergendoller & Marchman, 1987) and even teacher-principal relationships (Duckworth & Carnine, 1987), but little about the personal nature of teacher-student relationships and resultant instruction.

Method of Study

Data collected to study teachers' learning included transcripts from the monthly conversational meetings, from conversations in classrooms between the teachers and their students, among students in study groups, from individual interview sessions with both the teachers and selected students, and from teacher-collected and -interpreted samples of students' academic work. A research team visited each classroom an average of twice a month across a six-year period. We also periodically videotaped classroom conversations, arranged for teachers to visit each other's classrooms, and then asked teachers to reflect upon their own and their children's lives and learning on audiotape and in writing. In short, we all contributed to this study as

researchers, as is appropriate for a narrative inquiry. That approach to restorying educational experience suggests that the researcher-practitioner relationship, in which each party has voice in the retelling, is as important as the data examined for synthesis and restorying.

> Narrative inquiry in the social sciences is a form of empirical narrative in which empirical data is central to the work. . . . A number of different methods of data collection are possible as the researcher and practitioner work together in a collaborative relationship. . . . In the process of living the narrative inquiry, the place and voice of researcher and teacher become less defined by role. Our concern is to have a place for the voice of each participant. The question of who is researcher and who is teacher becomes less important as we concern ourselves with questions of collaboration, trust, and relationship, and we live, story, and restory our collaborative research life. (Connelly & Clandinin, pp. 5,10)

From almost 1,000 pages of data reflecting our conversations, we conducted many narrative analyses of emergent themes and issues. As Susan Florio-Ruane has told us, "Conversation as a research method is very likely to yield stories as data" (cited in Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 240). An important methodological feature which allowed us to hear and interpret the stories in uncharted forms was our willingness to be open and present to their tellings. The stories told here thus stand as data for emergent grounded theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which were constructed as they were initially told, related to other stories and theories, and reinterpreted as our understanding of learning to teach evolved. The theme of these empirical narratives involves the relational nature of teaching and how Mary and Leslie applied their theoretical beliefs about what others may call a social-constructivist process of learning to teach. We will describe it as "*relational knowing*." Data for these stories come primarily from the fourth and fifth study years (Mary's third and fourth year of teaching, and Leslie's fourth and fifth).

The believability or verisimilitude of these stories becomes apparent through the multiple examples which form the narrative whole. The empathetic or corroborative response in readers with similar autobiographical experiences is an example of their transferability and authenticity. (See Guba & Lincoln, 1989, and Van Maanen, 1988, for a discussion of alternative research criteria.)

Theoretical Background

A narrative interpretation of these teachers' learning as a personal and relational process has been validated by a range of theorists (see Figure 1). Long before Lev Vygotsky (1978) suggested that personally meaningful knowledge is socially constructed through shared understandings, John Dewey wrote of education as a social process and the school as a form of community life. The social life of the classroom "gives the unconscious unity and background of all [the child's] efforts and all his attainments. . . . The true center . . . is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's own social activities" (cited in Bruner, 1962, p. 113).

To understand the social process of school, other educators have suggested that teachers require a dynamic understanding of self in relationship to others across multiple contexts. Much good theoretical work has been done in this area, including that of Maxine Greene (1979), Arthur Jersild (1955), Jennifer Nias (1989), and Nell Noddings (1984). The heart of this work, for the purposes of the current argument, is that knowing through relationship to self and others is central to teaching the child. Jennifer Nias (1989), for example, reminds us that teachers interpret their pupils' actions and reactions in perceptual patterns that are unique to the person of teacher. Relational knowing is obviously different from the concept of a cognitive knowledge base of information which is acquired and stored as pedagogical currency for future use (Tierney, 1991), somewhat independent of the people and communities who will be using it. It also differs from Daniel Schon's (1983) concept of knowledge-in-use, or the thoughtful reflection of what's known as it is applied, although selves-in-relationship begin to appear in shadowy forms in this configuration.

The concept of knowing through relationship, or relational knowing, involves both the instantiation of and the reflection on what is known (see Table 1). Therefore, because of its fluid and present character, it cannot be termed "relational *knowledge*." Attentionally generated through a sense of care for self and other, relational knowing occurs more in energy or intuitive perception than in either concrete or abstract form. It evokes past memories of stored knowledge transformed into knowing through not only cognitive but moral, spiritual, psychological, and physical

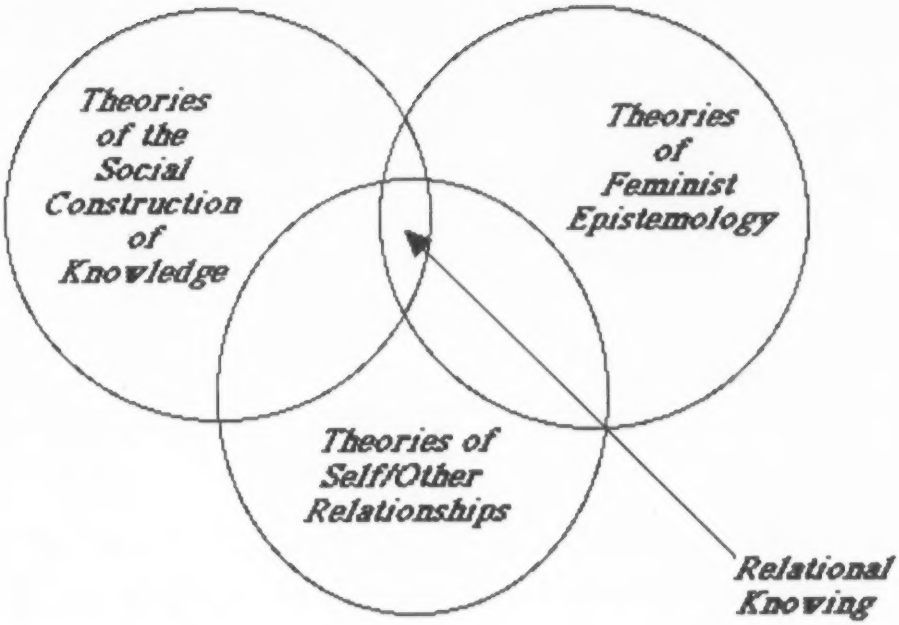
Theories of the Social Construction of Knowledge
Theories of Feminist Epistemology
Theories of Self/Other Relationships
Relational Knowing

Figure 1. Theoretical framework for the study of relational knowing.

Table 1

Relational Knowing

The concept of knowing through relationship, or relational knowing

** involves both the instantiation and the reflection on what is known

** cannot be termed "relational *knowledge*"--because of its fluid and present character

** is attentionally generated through a sense of care for self and other

** occurs more in energy or intuitive perception than in either concrete or abstract form

** evokes past memories of stored knowledge transformed into knowing through not only cognitive, but moral, spiritual, psychological, and physical responses

** allows the teacher to act in an intuitive mode: an involvement of the senses, a commitment and receptivity, a quest for understanding or empathy, and a productive tension between subjective certainty and objective uncertainty (Noddings & Shore, 1984)

responses. The teacher, drawing upon relational knowing in her interaction with children and curriculum, often acts in what Nell Noddings and Paul Shore (1984) have described as an intuitive mode. Intuitive modes are characterized by four major features: involvement of the senses, commitment and receptivity, a quest for understanding or empathy, and a productive tension between subjective certainty and objective uncertainty.

> The first thing that we noticed about intuitive modes was their characteristic receptivity, but when we backed up to see what lay behind the receptivity, we found commitment; that is, we found an act of Will that committed us to the mental mode we have called "intuitive." We commit ourselves to listening, watching, feeling. Thus, although the intuitive mode is often characterized by its lack of firm and specific goals, it clearly serves the purposes of the intuiter. (p. 122)

Other insights into relational knowing come from the work of Arthur Jersild. In an important but infrequently cited study published in 1955, Jersild speaks to the difficulty of learning to teach in social settings, since teachers do not know themselves in relationship. He argues, in fact, that a major purpose of education should be to help children and adults know themselves and develop healthy attitudes of self-acceptance. Following Karen Horney (1937, 1950), Jersild suggests that teachers must begin the process of naming and facing their own anxieties resulting from discontinuities between what they currently believe about themselves and what they must pretend to believe to be accepted by others. Only then can teachers claim the freedom of attention to relate to the self-conscious anxieties their children may feel and which limit their learning.

Maxine Greene (1979) gives further credence to this argument.

> Alienated teachers, out of touch with their own existential reality, may contribute to the distancing and even to the manipulating that presumably takes place in many schools. This is because, estranged from themselves as they are, they may well treat whatever they imagine to be selfhood as a kind of commodity, a possession they carry within, impervious to organizational demand and impervious to control. Such people are not personally present to others or in the situations of their lives. They can, even without intending it, treat others as objects or things. (p. 29.)

Sidestepping both the painful anxiety and the complexity which would come from the process of examining one's experiences of self in various relational settings, teacher educators (among others) with good intentions too often turn prospective teachers' attention to curriculum, pedagogical tasks and activities, and even to understanding others in a rational, dispassionate

manner. Accomplishing the work of such knowledge acquisition at a pace which defies personal reflection is another way that educators avoid the anxiety of coming to know either central beliefs about themselves or the meaning behind their chosen profession as teacher. The result can be technically "correct" but less than compassionate teaching because teachers are not freed by their training to develop the potential for compassion which comes from knowing themselves and others well.

A final perspective which suggests that teachers should engage in an existential understanding of the dialectical tensions between personal selves and publicly performing selves comes from feminist theory. A feminist perspective involves an existential level of awareness and consciousness of "one's social location and its relation to one's lived experience" (Nielsen, 1990, p. 24). For example, we operate from a feminist perspective when we are aware that women's views of reality might be judged as less valuable than the dominant societal views simply because they are unexperienced by the dominant group, not because they lack authority.

Most feminist theorists would not currently support theories of gender-determined values which leave both women and men incapable of understanding the other's position. Rather they see a continuum of personal values which are available to both men and women (Ferguson, 1989). However, feminist theorists do acknowledge the tension for women and men who choose, or whose job requires that they use, nurturing stances in their relations with *children* and competitive, impersonal stances in relations with *adults*. The situation is further complicated because one set of behaviors is consistently valued over the other in Western society. For example, elementary school teachers whose memory of care leads them to value intimate and passionately knowing ways with children as well as distanced, acontextual rules (depending on the situation) are too often encouraged to focus on the latter set of principles in their work. Their own lower social and political status in relation to administrators and university researchers, whose logical analyses carry more status, further encourages a rejection of their own multifaceted values and experiences.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's work (1986) demonstrates the importance of claiming such personal theory and experience as valid knowledge. They have shown how women,

secure in their own interpretation of reality, create their own knowledge as well as critically examine that of others. The women in Belenky et al.'s study who were most distant from personal knowledge interpretations had to rely solely on others' objective observations as truth. Teachers without a feminist perspective behave similarly. They may accept and employ others' expectations for distanced teaching uncritically and even cheerfully. Such teaching is often rewarded well in terms of administrative approval and improved (objective) test scores. Thus, there is a degree of personal safety in failing to examine one's own experience or building a case for alternative realities, but the limitations of such a perspective for teaching are costly. Children following such a model also fail to acknowledge their own personal and multifaceted selves and behave in relation to others as they are expected. Studies of young girls, for example, show that they are apt to give up their own senses of authority by adolescence (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990). The ultimate result of this loss of self-in-authority is a dependence on others' approval without the tempering that intimate relations have on their expectations, the loss of self-esteem after failing to measure up to a standard way of being, and the potential loss of many new ways of knowing and relating.

The tension involved in claiming as personally "true" teachers' intuitive or remembered ways of knowing and relating in the face of dissonant but publicly "true" explanations produces discomfort but also leads to new perspectives and creative solutions. The teachers in this study found solutions by assuming critical stances, retaining important objective or empirical findings which seemed epistemologically compatible, while allowing additional alternative ways of knowing in relation to their children to stand out in their own narratives. The result of listening to their stories of finding and knowing the shape of pedagogical and relational freedom could result in a more complete and complex understanding of learning to teach in classrooms.

Stories of Coming to Know Freedom in Learning to Teach

This paper draws on the theoretical perspectives described above to create interrelated narrative accounts of Mary Dybdahl's and Leslie Minarik's learning to teach through the support of on-going conversation, a passionate belief in themselves and their children as knowledge creators and evaluators, a willingness to create eclectic approaches to literacy characterized by relational

integrity, and a propensity to look critically at both their children and themselves in relationship to evaluate the results. Each of these themes will appear in the stories which follow. In each case, the personal reality of the situation differed somewhat from the cognitive and theoretical reality they had been taught as teacher candidates. The articulation of these differences became a freeing experience in learning to teach.

Learning Beyond the Teacher Education Programs

> Leslie: *During my first year I stayed inside the classroom, so to speak . . . I was artificially consumed with curriculum. I saw curriculum not only my primary role and responsibility, but as the only feature of of my work I could really give voice to. [Now] I see it differently. I have to face some broader issues.*

Upon graduation from their teacher education programs, Leslie (who had a bachelor's degree in French, and a fifth-year elementary credential) and Mary (with a bachelor's degree in the humanities, a master's degree, and accompanying elementary credential in education) felt fairly well prepared and eager to begin. Both women were mid-career teachers with business backgrounds, where professional training usually prepared them for the job to come. As was common of the mid-career professionals entering fifth-year programs, both had changed professions because of their caring for others and a wish to be involved in more intimate professions (see Hollingsworth, 1989).

Leslie, for example, came into teaching because she wanted to do work which would benefit people instead of products. She wanted to diminish the need to invoke the competitive sense of herself required by the business world and amplify the relational world of the elementary school classroom. Her desire to teach by knowing young children well, however, was interpreted as negative by the teacher educator who interviewed her as a credential candidate. *"It's not clear that teaching kids is what would best suit her needs--she might like counseling kids."* Five points were deducted from her interview score. For a while, Leslie's belief in relational knowing went underground as she put her faith in the teacher education program's emphasis on cognitively based teaching. After a period of retreat within the boundaries of her classroom to try and apply the

research-based literacy methods, she recalled "other" ways of knowing which she used to critique the more distanced teaching and learning stances promoted by her program.

To access such alternative stances, we developed a conversational approach as both a means of support in learning to teach and a method of longitudinal research. The approach was predicated by teachers' criticism of the support structures offered through traditional formats such as course work and supervision. As one of their reading methods instructors, I was privileged to hear their critiques first-hand, but only after the evaluative influence of course work was over. I learned that, though packed with good intentions and rich information, teachers often felt a lack of connection between formal teacher education settings, their personal beliefs about teaching, and their particular classroom problems.

Well-educated in a "whole language" philosophy which endorsed meaningful text (Harste, 1990) and the process writing approach of the Bay Area Writing Project (Gray, 1988), Mary and Leslie knew how to evaluate the quality of a child's reading miscues, to select good children's literature, to avoid phonics instruction, and to integrate reading and writing instruction. They did not think they knew what to do when children failed to pay attention or learn to read and write, except to invoke the rule of the method: involve children more fully in a print-rich environment. They did not consciously know how to challenge institutional constraints which limited opportunities for their children without privilege. Further, they did not think they knew what to do with all the real-world personal crises their children faced, because they had not been told. In actuality, a less cognitive part of them did or could know, but it was unpracticed and less available. Our open-ended conversational method of study was intended to provide occasions for such practice.

Leslie's and Mary's experiences were not atypical of either Western teacher education or schooling in general. Impersonal knowledge of the disciplines is often an explicitly stated objective of formal education (Berscheid, 1985). Mary and Leslie received praise for their logical analyses of children's reading behavior based on empirical evidence, yet their yearning to employ measures of care and compassion other than those theoretically grounded in cognitive

psychological theory were sometimes disregarded as inappropriate. Mary's program, for example emphasized the need for care, but only as grounded in the cognitive theory it supported. Were Mary even to choose an alternative *cognitive* approach to literacy instruction (phonics, for example), her instruction would not have been viewed as caring. Teacher educators in both programs acknowledged the importance of theoretically appropriate care in teaching from a cognitive perspective but were less likely to encourage the development of ethical caring which came from a memory of caring and a longing for goodness (see Buchmann, 1992; Noddings & Shore, 1984). For example, supervisors in Leslie's program often counseled against developing a "friendly" style of classroom management and promoted a more "technical" style in order to create an appropriate academic atmosphere.

As a result of the academic nature of care supported by the programs, actual stories about children and teachers in relationship were rarely incorporated into the traditionally organized programs. Limited time allocations dictated a valuing focus on curricular and learning theories and were most efficiently transmitted in an expert-to-novice model. For example, theories of socially constructed knowledge and the importance of prior knowledge in learning were frequently espoused, but teachers had a difficult time applying the theory meaningfully because their attention was focused away from both their own and their children's beliefs about the recommended theory. The result was a technically accurate but limited understanding of social constructions. Such cognitive "answers" for problems of learning to teach, given in isolation from their emotional experience of the problem, temporarily became more confusing than supportive.

What I learned, after the course had ended and the grades were posted, was that I had also contributed to the problem as a reading methods instructor and a researcher interested in their learning to teach literacy. At the beginning of our conversational meetings following graduation, I had pressed for continued cognitive attention to literacy instruction to meet the needs of my research contract with the U.S. Department of Education. Later Leslie wrote about my misguided insistence.

> *For [several] years I have been involved in a teacher/researcher collaborative group. The focus topic for the group was to be reading instruction and often has been. The group's support and assistance in helping me explore and evaluate my way through language arts curriculum has been immeasurable. However, it was not infrequent that the teachers in the group could not begin by discussing reading. A wealth of "stuff" had to be unloaded, vented, cried about and shared before we could discuss "our main topic"--the reading curriculum. Dr. Hollingsworth, wisely, but with some frustration, listened and then tried to guide us back on track. I can picture many such evenings.* (For more of Leslie's analysis, see Hollingsworth & Minarik, 1991.)

Mary and Leslie already had the cognitive portion of a theoretical understanding of the subject and pedagogy of literacy instruction, and now, expressing a genuine interest in learning about the less-well understood relational and social issues underlying their work in challenging classrooms, taught me to lend support to their search. I eventually dropped my stance as the literacy expert and began to listen and learn about the value of relational knowing--details of which came soon after the teachers had created a safe space to express the emotion embedded in their work. Opening my vision of learning to teach through the trust placed in me by these new teachers, I began to find evidence in our longitudinal data that lack of inclusive support for their own evolving personal and relational knowledge alongside their "paradigmatic" knowledge (Bruner, 1985) was a partial reason that one-quarter of the graduates I studied left the profession at the beginning of their careers. Similar findings are also reported elsewhere in the professional literature (see Howey & Zimpher, 1989). What I learned from Mary and Leslie about relational knowing is detailed in the narratives which follow.

Literacy Instruction in Urban Settings

> Mary: *Our students have to deal with so much stress in their lives that sometimes I'd rather show them some love than make them struggle through another reading assignment.*

Leslie and Mary taught in multiethnic schools where standardized scores on literacy examinations were usually low. The schools themselves were set in communities where there were no "standardized" family units with the freedom, the economic security, and the motivation to encourage further study after school. In Mary's class, one-quarter of the children had a parent in jail. Leslie's teaching day was often interrupted with children being pulled from school because their families had to move away to find work. Some children in both schools were homeless.

The discrepancy between the children's personal reality and the real expectations of school left much of the school curriculum with little meaning. Too often the children had other, more important issues on their minds--such as their personal safety while getting to school. Here's an example of a discussion that I had with Mary's children. We were probing the personal sense they had made of a literature unit on Rosa Parks.

> Parnel: *Some of the kids [at this school] act like gangsters. Some of them jumped me on the way home because I was wearing a red hat. They took it.*
>
> Keena: *They was Bloods!*
>
> Angelica: *Yeah, from the Blood Gang. You can't wear a red hat! You have to cover it up with something else.*
>
> Keena: *I don't care! I got red on.*
>
> Angelica: *Sometimes, they don't want you to walk around or anything. Like my brother, Fred, you know, he's white. He's afraid to walk down the street to the bus stop.*
>
> Sam (Hollingsworth): *Sounds like you've got a little Civil Rights work to do at this school.*
>
> Kevin: *My cousin, she said that the Crests are starting to come over here to fight after school.*
>
> Sam: *Why do they fight?*
>
> Kevin: *I don't know. I think because they don't like white people or they don't like people coming into the parts that they live in. And on the sidewalk, it has "The Crests" written big.*
>
> Parnel: *Yeah, they're bad!!*
>
> Kevin: *One time my brother, he went to a party. And then some people came into where the party was and they had guns. One hit my brother in the, uh, jaw with a gun and he had to go to the hospital and his jaw was like real big, like this big. And he had to have his teeth wired shut, and he couldn't talk no more.*
>
> Sam: *How did that make you feel?*
>
> Kevin: *Mad. Sad.*

Understandably, many of Mary and Leslie's children lacked the secure sense of personal safety needed to sit quietly focused in a classroom and work together. Others, *fully a third in each classroom*, had such poor literacy skills that performing academic work of any nature was difficult. Their attention was turned more toward coping with the demands of literacy tasks rather than

acquiring literacy. The children's teachers not only faced the enormous challenge of teaching them to read and write but learning to know the children well enough to provide appropriate emotional support. Unfortunately, external support for this project was not consistently available by school psychologists. Even the presence of such support would not have helped the teachers personally know and relate to their children. Thus part of their teaching time was spent getting to know the children's stories so that they could appropriately respond relationally as well as academically to them. For example, one of Mary's early lessons about differences in measuring children's relationships with success inside and outside of school came the hard way, when reporting Parnessa's low standardized literacy test scores to her grandmother.

> *[The African-American] grandmother brought the point home to me. She took righteous exception to the failing marks I reported for her granddaughter. She said, "What does this say about my child--that she's a moron, she's stupid and slow? Does it say that I read to her every night? Does it say that her mother's in jail and her daddy died just last year? Does it tell you that she's getting her life together, slowly? Does it say that she's learning songs for Sunday school? Does it say she wants to be a doctor? What does this piece of paper say about my baby? I don't want it near her. She needs good things. She's had enough in her life telling her that she's no good. She doesn't need this and I won't have it. I refuse to sign a piece of paper that says my child is no good."*

Here's an example of Mary's coming to know another student, Angelica, and the effect of that knowing on their instructional relationship. The description is somewhat lengthy, but worth the effort.

> *The next student I'd like to talk about is Angelica. A little bit of background about her. She's a fourth grade girl, she's an African American, she is . . . she has one brother, older brother, so she's kind of the baby. She has cousins that go to this school. They're on different schedules [in the year-round school], so they're not real real tight, although I think they do spend quite a bit of time together outside of school.*
>
> *Angelica is being raised by her father. Her mother died about a year and a half ago. She died of cancer and Angelica has had a very, very difficult time dealing with life. She probably had a difficult time dealing with life when her mom was still living just because her mother was sick. She, I think she kept her emotions under wrap more at the beginning of the year, and I did not see the pain that she was going through as much. As she began to trust me more and I began to challenge her more she was able to show me her emotions and her pain. That's been very hard because of the position I'm in as her teacher. She's a very bright little girl. She's got really good skills, she gets some support from home, not so much from her dad, although he is there for her on some levels, but from her grandmother and from an auntie.*

She's just . . . she's just having such a hard time focusing and I can't blame her. It's got to be a really painful thing going through as a child, losing your mother.

As a consequence, in this year she has mainly been sort of declining in her productivity. She . . . actually I don't think it's really been declining, I think that I've been able to see the fact that she is not focused. I've been able to see in her work the lack of attention. And, so, some things work really well for her and some things don't. The Rosa Parks project was a really really strong connection for her. She was able to pull a lot from her family and from her own personal history from her connection with the church and bring that all together to keep her enthusiastic and interested in that project. By the time we got to the free-choice reading program, the nine-week reading program, there was not that connection . . . there wasn't a circle of strength for her. It was a real solo thing and I don't think she's got a lot of personal strength available for school. So it's interesting to see her interaction with the two different reading programs.

Throughout the year something would be . . . hard or painful emotionally, reading a poem, for instance, from Eloise Greenfield's book. In the poem "Nathaniel," a character in the book talks about how he feels about his mother dying. It . . . took me two days before I could read that poem out loud because I knew that Angelica and I would both be having a hard time with it. And sure enough, when I did get around to reading it, I had to wait until I had enough personal strength in order to read that poem and . . . and have enough strength to give her. Her mother's death was really painful.

I digress, I'm talking more about Angelica and myself than I am about the reading program . . . but, I've had a hard time assessing Angelica based on any of the work that we've been doing because of the backdrop of her life, or the substance of her life that hasn't to do with school. I don't think that she's made a whole lot of progress in developing her literacy this year and I don't know that that's such a horrible thing. From a teacher's point of view, I think it's horrible. I want her to enjoy books. I want her to find solace for her pain and her fears by reading about other people but she's not ready to do that. I mean maybe I'm ready to do that, but she's not ready to do that. I want her to not lose years of her academic growth because she lost her mother. I don't want her to find herself in ninth grade and having all the pains of being a ninth grader and not having any base of math, for instance, so that she can go on and take algebra and be able to choose to become a doctor or what . . . I know that that's a leap to project Angelica out into her life like that, but it's what happens . . . I think about my responsibilities and what it is I need to do in the classroom but then . . . when I read a poem and Angelica starts crying and I know exactly why, it's real hard for me to say "You need to write in your journal today. You didn't do your math this morning. You didn't do this, and you haven't done your homework and your reading log's not coming in and . . ." Getting on her case and telling her I'm gonna call her father and having her cry about that . . . it's really a dilemma and I don't know that that's something I'm gonna solve today or tomorrow or anytime.

It seems important to point out that the emotional impact of Parnessa's and Angelica's out-of-school worlds on their classroom work were more the norm than the exception. As a result, Mary's and Leslie's personal compassion for their children's lives outside of school was a central feature of their teaching.

Curricular Relationships

Because of the situational context of their work and who they were as women, Leslie and Mary chose curriculum to satisfy personal and emotional needs as well as technical and cognitive.

> [There are limitations to] the dominant conception of curriculum as course of study, as product, as text to be covered, and ends to be achieved and measured. I know that these conceptions are part of what constitute working definitions of curriculum especially for teachers and administrators in schools. However . . . my work is aligned with those who view curriculum as also defined within students' and teachers' biographical, historical, and social situations that they bring to the classroom as well as within the relational classroom experiences that they share with texts, with education structures, and with one another. (Miller, 1990, p. 11)

With the passion of newcomers in careers of choice, both Mary and Leslie believed themselves and their children to be capable of working on the tension between personal sensitivity and academic progress together. To meet the challenge, they took on many types of relational and empirical stances, including learning from the children, having them become authors of their own researched knowledge, seeking support from other adults for their dilemmas, and breaking away from the boundaries of traditional curricular programs to follow their own interested relationships to the tasks. Leslie wrote about the relational support she received to move away from isolated subject instruction and integrate the disciplines through reading, discussing and responding. (See Walmsley & Walp, 1990, for a discussion on interdisciplinary themes.)

> *During one spring [in my third year of teaching], a friend, who was also the other second-grade teacher, and I began sharing our frustration with science. We found ourselves in conversations along the lines of, "What are you thinking of doing for science this week? I've got a rock collection." Both of us felt extremely unhappy with such a disconnected, piecemeal approach. There was a district science text, but following it was again a disconnected approach unrelated generally to any other curriculum covered during the year. The conversations increased and ideas began to flow. By the end of the year we had committed ourselves to the idea of doing "themes" the following year which would integrate science for the first time into our language arts program. . . .*
>
> *The integration of science opened up creativity and enthusiasm in Linda and me. As such we turned out to be excellent role models for our second graders because we were learning as they were learning. We encouraged them to teach us. We all became "scientists" or "researchers," who, by the way, needed to read to gather information, write to record what we learned to to transform what we had learned into stories, poems, letters, etc. We created art projects because, for example, it was a good way to learn how the Navajo Indians wove. We learned songs, we saw videos and movies, we took walks and used the environment in our projects, we did plays and performed them. With the focus being the theme and not the text,*

anything was a source. We found ourselves much more creative than we had been when we had taught second grade curriculum from a more traditional approach in which the district mandated textbooks run the curriculum.

Mary wrote about the new unit on Rosa Parks in her Civil Rights literature theme developed outside of the traditional curriculum in *her* third classroom year. Though her curricular choices differed from Leslie's, the goals were similar, as were the means--a personal relationship between teacher, the curriculum, and the children. Mary, by societal conditioning, was hesitant to include her personal needs and interests in a discussion of curricular goals. Yet they were clearly as important to the selection of the materials as were the children's needs and interests.

Some of the goals that I set for myself and for my students for this particular unit on Rosa Parks were research skills . . . helping the children develop research skills so that they would have the power within themselves to find out about any topic they wanted. The next was the basic language art skills of reading and writing, listening and discussing. I wanted them to learn to generate their own questions about a particular topic. I wanted them, of course, I always do, to become better cooperative learners, and an overwhelming goal was for them to be successful.

There was another overriding goal as well, however, and I think that that motivates me more than anything, if I'm going to be honest about the goals that I set for myself and my class. I wanted the students to be really enthusiastic about Rosa Parks. She was a person that I have always had a great deal of respect for and . . . as a symbol to me, she epitomized a regular person who takes a lot of risks, who sees a certain amount of personal power in becoming politically active. I wanted the children to see that as a way to empower themselves in a world that very frequently takes power away from people. I also wanted the kids to cooperate. Although I don't think I taught that directly in this particular project, I wanted them to look beyond what Rosa Parks stood for. I wanted them to look beyond the Civil Rights movement, and I wanted them to look at what all of that stood for as far as people being able to get along--whether with a racial issue or from an organizational point of view. And somehow I wanted them to experience that. Those were the overriding goals.

Mary changed specific strategies and curricular materials several times during the unit to achieve those goals. Her close attention to children's responses, not external knowledge of curricular principles or pedagogical strategies, guided their progress. Pleased by the enthusiasm of her African-American children about the Rosa Parks unit, but troubled by the minimal response from Filipino children, Mary then brought in the *Grandfather's Stories* from the Philippines.

I don't think I had a single Filipino student in my class that did not read those. . . . And it was interesting at first, there was a certain amount of embarrassment about the book, that it had to do with the Philippines and self-hatred, but it was one of those things that I really pumped up . . . I wanted those kids to feel really comfortable about having that book in the classroom and that we all need to know

about other cultures and we all need to know about our own cultures that we've left behind and in some ways that we have brought with us. After making this big public statement about it and sharing the book and looking at it, I got a lot more book reports. . . . They recognized things that they'd either been told about or had seen in their own lives.

For Mary, curriculum was not only a vehicle for learning literacy and content knowledge but a means for developing relationships between life and school--and for developing friendships across the various cultural ways in her classroom.

Cooperation and Self/Other Acceptance as a Pedagogical Means to Literacy

> Every mode of knowing is also a mode of being in relationship. It is a relationship of mutual care and love, often distorted into mere attentiveness and sometimes distorted into control and oppression. When vulnerable one must either recognize and accept the other and the necessity of care or love, or one must seek control of the other, who is both threat and possibility. (Huebner, pp. 170-171)

Mary and Leslie not only attended to curriculum which fostered relational knowing in children but also to how classes are structured. In our conversation meetings, Leslie talked about her belief against a traditionally competitive classroom. She, like Mary, saw that competitive activities, testing and grading--as a general rule--were inappropriate to meet the needs of their particular classes.

I have always tried in my classroom to downplay competition; for some very strong, personal reasons, my motto has been that "the important thing is to try." Learning by working together became so normal in the class that helping your friends to write or read was just what we did. As competition and comparing decreased, the classroom became a more equitable environment for all students. Those who had trouble reading or writing could always be involved in a project because they were supported and helped by their friends.

Connected, noncompetitive support was *not* a pedagogical structure Leslie had practiced during her teacher education program. In one of her student teaching classrooms, she learned to administer independent contracts to students for literacy instruction. The sixth graders read independently (and silently) and then filled out comprehension questions on accompanying worksheets. No conversation or sharing was encouraged. Similarly, in the literature-based approach she was taught, students were to read aloud individually in a whole-class setting, then discuss the text by answering teacher-directed probes. Children were also encouraged to model their thinking aloud in reciprocal teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1987) activities. When Leslie

moved into her own classroom, she modified the popular whole-class approach by having children read and respond chorally. There are consistent and vivid demonstrations of this pattern and the children's happy participation on videotape.

Mary also disliked having students read without the support of a group. She talked to a member of our research team about her experiences:

> *I rarely have the kids read aloud. The acoustics in the room are so bad that it is hard for kids to hear. I don't like to do it. The kids who enjoy reading outloud aren't necessarily the kids who do the best job at it. . . . It's not effective. My kids don't listen to each other. They complain: "I couldn't hear!" "She reads too fast!" The story just gets ripped to pieces. By the time that we've gotten two pages done I've had to interrupt them 15 times and ask somebody to speak up and ask somebody to slow down. And I will not let them correct each other, not out loud. If someone is sitting next to someone and they help them in a whisper then that's fine. But I don't want five kids jumping on poor Jamilia. She just can't stand to be corrected. She gets furious and embarrassed. She's real sensitive about her reading.*

Mary also emphasized a spirit of cooperation and self/other acceptance in the way materials were chosen and groups were formed. Accepting a child's perception that a group was not right for him or her was part of the arrangement.

> *Kids weren't really restricted to any of the books that I chose. They could choose books that they brought in or that they got off of our classroom library shelf. In one case I took a girl into our school library to see if we could find a book that she wanted to read. So, it was self-selected material that they were reading, skewed by the fact that I did bring in books and made suggestions of books that they should read. They self-selected their partner or partners or they could choose to work alone. Now, they were not making a commitment to stay with the partner the entire nine-week period. They could change partners when they finished a book. As a matter of fact, I really didn't hold anyone to making a commitment to another person.* (For more on Mary's "friendship pairs," see Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 1991).

Mary saw great advantages in personal and academic achievement for cooperative relationships:

> *I can't hide my absolute thrill at how those two girls worked together. It made Keena see herself as a serious student. Wanda has always been a serious student. What happened for Keena was that she saw herself as an achiever. As a productive, serious person, not just the girl that is totally boy crazy, not just the girl who maybe can get by, but she was a serious intelligent student. . . . Wanda is always, she's one of those perfect little students. She would, she finished everything she did, she did a really wonderful job, not particularly creative. She, she was a fairly good tutor if I put her with little, with younger kids but she wasn't, she never, I thought she was going to be a leader. I wanted her to be a leader real badly. And so I kept putting her in positions like that and it just never worked out. But one-on-one with Keena what happened was she was able to experiment a little*

bit with creativity rather than just the rote work. Wanda would produce the perfect sentences, the perfect everything. It was boring. And . . . she loosened up, she became more creative, I mean even with their writing forms--you know how they would switch the pens back and forth? For Wanda that was real progress. She was trying out something. They did those great stories where they wrote their biographies. Each one wrote one for the other person. I thought they were very sensitive. I thought the partnership was really wonderful on both sides.

Yet cooperation was not the rule if students needed other approaches.

Mary: *I frequently worry about a few kids who would prefer just very strict routine. On a daily basis they'd read for 20 minutes then they'd do a worksheet and have a spelling test. I think a lot of kids would be happy with that.*

Sam: *Like. . .?*

Mary: *Kevin, Celeste, the kids who said to you, "Why are you asking what we're doing?" They were the kids who are the most most uncomfortable with my free-flowing, non-competitive activities. And I did accommodate them. They're the ones I gave contracts to. They felt good about that and they did, as much as I didn't like their impersonal conclusions about the books that they read, they did feel like they were successful.*

Mary's acceptance of herself as an explorer of human and curricular relationships allowed her to try on *my* perception of a case where the emphasis on cooperation might be relaxed. She later reflected on the effect of that conversation.

Micky. Micky had . . . I tried so hard, remember at the beginning of the year? I was forcing him to work with a partner and I kept making him, making him, making him. And finally, you know, you backed me up and said "Wait a minute! You need to look at this child differently." I was having such a hard time with him. And I realized that I needed to back off and let him choose his own way and in that [free-choice] reading program, he was able to do that. He was able to float in and out so that he might just really, really work hard by himself on <u>The Great Cheese Conspiracy</u>, and then entice others into his isolated corner, and then come out of it with them. I mean . . . I loved that! There was this dance of my little "loner student," in and out of these social relationships based on his incredible retelling skills, and his artistic skills, and his attempts at being a social without the threat of forced cooperation.

Neither Mary nor Leslie was concerned about the fact that they did not have permanently formulated literacy programs by the beginning of their fourth years. There was a solid ring of self-acceptance in response to a probe about the fear of administrative critique of their eclectic programs. Mary replied, *"We're beginners. We're expected to ask questions and explore, make mistakes, back up and go forward."* She intended that her children feel just as secure in their progress. Assuming that teaching was a form of research on relationships was a stance that helped Mary and Leslie in their explorations.

Systematic Inquiry into the Relationships

> Mary: *I want to know . . . what [my students] think [as they read]. I have to figure out how I can structure a lesson to find that out--or a discussion. I prefer to set it up and then see if I get any reactions to it. Otherwise, I'm doing all of the thinking and I'm doing all of the talking and am pushing my point.*

It was Leslie's and Mary's own inquiry into whether their programs promoted literacy for children which led them to further modify the programs, yet keep their belief in nonisolated instruction. Mary had a particular interest in her children's emotional development as well as the cognitive focus promoted by her teacher education program. Her interest led to a deepening understanding of learning through relationship.

> *Keena did one book report with Celeste. This is interesting. It was a reconciliation, considering Celeste and Keena were ready to kill one another. They did a reconciliatory book report on the Grandfather Stories from Mexico. When I look at this, when I look at the dynamics here, I see this whole process as being so social, yet not [consciously] built in at all to my [literacy] program. I mean, nowhere did I say I want you to work with x number of people, and I want you to work with the person you've been having the most problems with on the playground--or, I want you to work with the person that is your best friend. Of course I was never saying any of that, but I think what had happened is that, by allowing that flexibility in the way, and with whom, children work, it allowed them to use that academic program to facilitate some of their relationship problems. . . . Anyway it's an interesting idea and it would be a whole different study to figure out the social ramifications of any kind of a reading program and whether it helped with social development, whether it had anything to do with emotional development as well as cognitive development.*

Mary set out goals for each unit and ways of assessing children which also preserved her belief in relational knowing. She talked about some of her measures:

> *One of the ways that I have been measuring cooperation is by the stability of the groups. I question that now, but it was one of the measurements that I felt I could use. I determined whether a group of students was developing better cooperation skills by looking at the stability of the group. And the integrity of the questions. In other words, if an individual came into the group with a specific research question that they felt very good about, felt like a genuine question . . . how were they able to hold onto that question as a group member? Was their question lost completely, was it turned into somebody else's question, was it . . . was the personality of the question changed so that it was homogenized for the group?*
>
> *Then I began to measure cooperation by looking to see if they were able to move from the topic of Rosa Parks into our own lives. Are they able to see the significance of political activity? Are they able to see the power of the individual in the bigger picture? Are they able to see how important cooperation is in something like the Montgomery bus boycott, so that children can see that's a skill, that's not*

just a school skill, but it's a life skill? Those are all ways that I would measure whether or not we were successful. . . .

Keena came closest to, closer than me, came very closest to coming out of this project with the kinds of feelings and question that I had hoped that we would come to. Struggling with issues of racism in our lives and between us, between us in our classroom. And I think that she was able to do that because of the support that she was getting at home. I wish that I had been more keyed into that to begin with because I may have been able to figure out a way to bring more of that into the classroom.

When children did not achieve the intended curricular goals, Mary questioned their emotional relationship to the topic--and to her as teacher.

Celeste had real resistance to the whole project and I speculated about that with her. I asked her whether it made her uncomfortable. She said no, she thought that Rosa Parks was boring, she was more interested in Dr. Martin Luther King. I . . . suggested to her perhaps that I was the one that chose the topic and that she was much more interested in choosing her own topic. She said yeah, that was it but . . . I doubt that because she really didn't have a replacement. She fell back on wanting to do a report on Dr. Martin Luther King. And I wonder if the issues of the racial tension were such that it was hard for her. She was one of the kids who persisted in coming back to the issue of Martin Luther King's relationship with white people. It was of interest to her, it was a challenge to her, and I think she saw [resisting the study of Rosa Parks] as a challenge to me. "Classroom resister" is an important function she plays in the classroom. I think that may have been part of it. Very complicated.

Another example of this line of inquiry involved a rather complex relational analysis into the quality of children's research questions. Mary found that the stability of their questions in a group had to do with the children's emotional interest in the topic and their history with the topic, as well as the availability of materials written by authors with similar interest and perspectives, so that answers to their questions could be found.

Of course, relational measures were not the only forms that Mary and Leslie used. After discussing her program at one of our monthly conversational meetings, Leslie suggested that her study of the whole-class literature approach with patterned language told her that the program really seemed to support children's reading. Her assessment of their levels of task engagement showed that they all seemed to be responding well with the whole-class choral response. While valuing both her analysis of the whole class from her broad perspective and her ethical stance in her inquiry, I challenged Leslie to also study the class from a less-distanced view. I had seen children in many classrooms who cleverly "appeared" to be reading in the whole-class response setting, but

who were actually having serious problems. The large-group setting distanced the teacher from individual children and made their struggle hard to detect.

Leslie took the challenge. To observe them closely in a nonthreatening manner, she asked three children at a time to practice then perform a choral reading. A research assistant visiting her classroom asked how she could tell who was actually reading and who wasn't in a choral situation. *"Oh, they'll be like a beat behind, they'll be a half a word behind. . . . They can do it so quickly that it might not be noticeable unless you are paying attention."*

As a result of this and other explorations, Leslie became disenchanted with her unexamined belief in all popular programs--and particularly in broad and external, generalized methods as "the way" to teach literacy. Through a process of attending to individual children and noticing (researching) their responses to her instruction, she developed a variety of interrelated strategies which would reach every child. Most of her program supported the currently-popular whole-language philosophy which she continued to endorse. The specific strategies she chose, however, were a reflection of her evolving belief in connected and experiential knowing. Through close attention to the children engaged in these activities, Leslie found that they actually taught her what they needed. (For more on her learning, see Hollingsworth, Minarik, & Teel, in press.) Leslie now had good evidence to talk about the benefits of cooperation over competition for specific children.

> *In a traditional classroom, Andy would have struggled through. However, I would worry about Andy in this kind of a setting in which he would be expected to work independently and individually and in which the competition and comparative environment was stronger. Andy is fragile or borderline. He needs to feel support and success or he gives up quickly. Like most of us, he thrives and makes progress when he feels successful. Competition for him is everywhere, at home with his brothers and in sports every day. A less stressful situation was one in which he worked with three girls who supported his learning and improved his self-esteem. Andy went from lacking creativity and enthusiasm in writing (as noted from journal writing), to enthusiastic participation in research projects which were an outgrowth of our themes. Since the themes were more related to his interests and continued for several weeks, he grew more confident with the material and was more on task.*

Leslie also used relational inquiry to make sure children from different cultures received the support they required.

I don't quite understand when people say, you know, how do you adjust your teaching for children's cultural diversity. I'm not sure I understand exactly what that means. But I interpret it for my own self as giving each bunch of kids what they need.

Finally, Leslie also gathered evidence that her multifaceted approach to literacy was helpful for low-level readers. She felt free enough to vary the thematic approach for some students who needed daily linguistic instruction in reading (after Guszak, 1985). They met with an aide 20 minutes a day for specialized practice. Though she knew that such reading instruction was not "popular" in the whole-language environment of her school--and rather extraneous to her belief in themes--she felt it provided those readers with a safety net to support them and give them success while they were moving into the thematic literature and science texts their peers could handle more readily. Leslie followed target students as case studies to see whether the approach was working.

In studying three students very specifically over the year and the class in general, using video- and audiotapes, writing samples, pre- and postbrainstorming assessments and changes in performance and participation, I was surprised to discover the very real benefit of using a thematic approach to teaching for children who would have otherwise failed in a "traditional" classroom, where lessons were based on selections from basals, workbooks, and science/social studies chapters (often all unrelated) followed by standard written tests.

She found the approach very helpful for Jarvin.

At the beginning of the year Jarvin, an African-American child, by all traditional measures was a "failure"--although I hate to use that word. He could still not spell his last name. He needed counters to add single-digit numbers. He could barely write a sentence and was reading at beginning first-grade level. His inability to contribute or keep up in class left him feeling frustrated and sad.

The themes provided Jarvin room to show how verbally bright he is, and how he is able to make connections. I have a sample of writing in which Jarvin pulls from various assignments we'd had previously in the month of December, very much like Alice and other good readers and writers did. So he's been making those connections. His mind is working quite well, he just can't get things down on paper.

Using themes opened up a lot of variety in resources which were not text-bound and which Jarvin could use. . . . He could see films on penguins and other things, and we could do experiments and he could see things visually and that allowed him to discuss and participate. As his writing skills got better, [they] also allowed him to make that transfer from what he saw to paper. I don't think that, unless Jarvin had been given the specific [linguistic] reading support and the vocabulary repetition which came with the themes, that he would have learned to read for himself.

Here's a story that Ricky and Jarvin wrote together which shows he's hearing information, he's drawing on what he's learned in the classroom, he's watching somebody write or helping them write or contributing. Jarvin's having the kind of support for reading and writing [that he's getting in this varied program] is really really critical. By far he gained more than the other two (more able target children) in this kind of environment. (See examples of Jarvin's work in Appendix A.)

That Leslie was satisfied with a process of determining whether the literacy program worked in her current class did not mean that her learning to teach was complete. In her fifth year of teaching, she still talked about the need for relational and empirical inquiry to establish new literacy programs suitable for the variations in each new class:

Mary and I were laughing as we were driving back from [the California Reading Conference in] Sacramento because, the whole point of our paper, sort of the conclusion that we had both come to, was that there is no perfect reading curriculum, and that's what we had both discovered. I mean that every year you basically just have to see what class assembles, and then just sort of figure out then adjust everything and do whatever the kids need. And yet, you know, you start off each year thinking that you can just do the same thing. "Oh good, this was the same thing I did last year and it will be so easy!" And, then, you try and it was like. . . . I had finally had to admit to myself that no, I couldn't do the same thing I had done last year. That I actually was going to have to come to grips with the fact that this group was not the same as last year's group and I couldn't do the same thing.

Through coming to see learning to teach as an ongoing process, the freedom that Mary and Leslie gained from this process of inquiring into their own learning not only increased their children's academic success and sense of self-worth, but let the teachers know that they had the knowledge to create and evaluate any reading program they might choose to try. The sense of emancipation that defining success for themselves gave them from curricular packages and text was important to their learning to teach. Leslie used that freedom to rally support among her peers to challenge what they perceived to be other inequitable curricular policies (see Hollingsworth & Minarik, 1991).

Institutional Support for Teachers as Knowers

As valuable as Mary and Leslie found relational inquiry for establishing their programs and assessing student progress, self-initiated inquiry of any type was devalued by Leslie's school district.

> *No one gives us credit for the research we do. I conducted systematic research all last year, wrote papers, presented at conferences. I applied for professional development credit [for that work] and I was turned down. They will give me credit for mentoring another teacher, or for attending a workshop, but not for critically examining my own teaching.*

Mary found more support for her inquiry-based innovations. Her administrators have even checked with her frequently about the progress of her work in our collaborative group.

The support that both Leslie and Mary received from the extra-institutional conversational support group and the university-based research team visits to their classrooms helped keep up the energy needed to document their research. My role as a teacher educator involved both challenge, as described above, and support.

> Mary: *I've relied a lot on Sam. . . . On her observations and comments.* When she comes out to observe? *Yeah. It has been real helpful because I always try something different and so its always risky. And it is nice to have someone say something positive about it: "Oh, that worked. Or I saw kids really doing what you're expecting them to do." When I'm thinking: "Oh Gosh, I've blown it again, I'm out on a limb, I've taken a chance." I don't mind doing that but these kids really need a lot of help. . . . Sometimes I think I shouldn't be experimenting in the same sort of ways that I would as a student teacher . . . sometimes I freak out about that.*

Learning new ways of thinking about teaching and learning from watching and listening to Mary and Leslie myself, I actively supported them as part of the growing teacher-research movement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). I was coming to see teacher research not only as a central feature in learning to teach but as a political effort to reform teaching, schooling, and educational research. Others at Mary's school were also cognizant of the larger importance of their research efforts and have recently secured state funding to assist Mary and other teachers at their school with part-time aides. They are further supported in their teacher-research project through their Professional Development Center. Leslie's efforts were not as well supported and often led to discouragement over the amount of energy required.

> *I think realistically if you're going to try and prove a point you have to have more documentation somehow. And I don't know how to go about doing that so that everyone would accept it. And I, and actually I don't probably want to spend a lot more energy, because I'd rather teach and that would take away from teaching. I mean it's good enough for me to know it. And to have seen it. My goal is to help the children. And not necessarily . . . my goal is not to prove to somebody else. But I think realistically this country's in a mood where people need hard evidence and so . . .*

"Proof" of results to satisfy others is an issue for further discussion. In my effort to support their work, I understood more about their learning to teach when I simply observed them develop their own methods and measures. I also broadened my thinking about methodology. My direct interventions to help them gather evidence which would convince university researchers were not personally useful. I also came to see that writing about their research at the end of a project and providing detailed evidence outside of the relational mode was less a function of who Leslie and Mary were as teachers than it was about who I am as a university faculty member. The most important feature to them was not to disseminate what they've learned but to come to know their children better.

The Self in Pedagogical Style

> A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own. (Greene, 1988, p. 14)

As a result of their continuous searching, Mary and Leslie came to firmly believe that they could design programs where children's sense of selves would be preserved. Where children could see themselves as capable of literacy. Mary summarized her views about reading programs to foster positive expectations in a conversation with me:

> *Using a single approach hadn't worked. Because the kids are so different and at such different levels of skills and different levels of interest. . . . What I tried to do was to make the program itself be so . . . have so many different parts where kids could be successful at some place in that program, whether it was they were really good writers or were really good drawers, they were able to do an oral report compared to doing a written report, they could tape record themselves reading instead of . . . so that, the kids could see some place in this program that they could be successful. They could look forward to some activity, at some point, either during the day or during the week where they could be successful.*

Leslie's and Mary's many investigations into the relationship between their literacy programs and children's becoming literate also had personal meaning. Mary's compassion for children who were struggling with literacy, for example, was grounded in her own memory of herself learning to read.

> *I think about the, my struggle with learning to read is something that I share very readily with kids and with parents in my school. Because I think there is an assumption that if you don't get it you're lost, it's all over with, and I can't stand that. I can't stand that notion that people will think that it's too late. And I didn't*

have anybody, you know, come to my rescue. It came of it's own free will when it needed to. There was also the expectation that I would read, and I can't stand that people will remove that expectation [for these children] and in fact will replace it with sort of a condemnation: "You won't read!"

Leslie's historic sense of strength in her own abilities led her to wish the same for children as learners in school.

As I became more engaged in the integrated/thematic approach and more analytical about the value of this approach, I couldn't help but return to the basic question, "What is learning?" And so I engaged the children in this question. There were discussions on what learning was, why we did it, how we applied it, where it happened and who did it. . . . By the end of the year I was a very happy teacher who gazed out on a room of eight-year-olds who had transformed themselves from "students" to "researchers, teachers, and scientists." Students were more conscious of nature/science programs on television and of gathering information from them, as many sharing times in class demonstrated. . . . There were more discussions in class about what they had seen or noticed on the way home. Children discovered new sections in the library and books around their homes that they brought in to use as teaching sources.

Regardless of the similarity in their commitment and their interest in program variety, Mary's and Leslie's particular teaching styles reflected their ways of being in the world. Listen to Mary's conversation with me about differences between herself and Leslie.

Mary: *Leslie's reading approach is much more organized than mine. I can't hold my interest that long. I can't, not even for daily journal or free writing. It doesn't fit my temperament. So my teaching has to change. It has to have movement. And that's one way that I'm real different from Leslie.*

What Leslie does that I really appreciate is within her structure she provides choice. I think she can do that because she's a calmer person than I am. Her energy is directed in a different way. Her energy is directed more emotionally. She's just a lot calmer in her presentation and in her approach. She's . . . I don't know what it is. One of my colleagues, Meisha, and I were talking about this. Our style is more hyperactive. We are the people in our classrooms who generate the most free-floating anxiety and energy. That we're the ones that set the pace. That we're the ones who cause the kids to be out of their seats, who cause the kids to sharpen their pencils when they shouldn't, that it's somehow or other it's the kind of energy that we bring into, we interrupt ourselves in the middle of something to say, you know what we should do! We'll get kids off task because we see something so incredible we can't stop ourselves from saying Look! Look what Kanisha did.

Sam: *Sort of a spontaneity.*

Mary: *Yeah. We've talked about how our energy produces a different kinds of interaction with kids. We can't learn a management style that's not part of our way of relating with kids in groups. Even if other people think we should. It's not just that we've learned, "Oh, that's not what you do if you really want to have good classroom management." We didn't . . . we're not going to have that, we're carrying our own styles*

on. Leslie didn't have to learn [an artificial managerial style] either. She's had a sense of herself in a different way in the classroom from the beginning.

Mary's understanding and accepting belief in herself carried over to her expectations of children's responses to text. In giving performance feedback to her students, she often asked that they involve themselves.

> *I asked the kids to research Rosa Parks and that phase of the Civil Rights movement by coming up with questions which were important to them. One interesting thing that happened in this particular activity was the ways that students formed their questions. Some students addressed their question as if it would be answered by Rosa Parks herself, for instance, "Do you still live in Montgomery?" Other students addressed their question to sort of a broader audience, such as "What was it like in Vallejo back in those days?" "How old would Martin Luther King Jr. be today if he was still alive?" . . . One of the places that the questions came from involved homework assignments where I asked them to go home and ask questions about Rosa Parks. . . . I think what happened with that particular activity was that it . . . localized the issue for students. . . . They were grappling with the concept of historical perspective and what they were trying to do, it seems to me, was to ground it in something that was closer to home. Something that was a lot nearer to them than Montgomery, Alabama. A lot nearer to them than some southern kind of environment. That seemed to have come up quite a bit. There was also a real marked difference between some Filipino students and African-American students in the questions that they generated. It wasn't as personal for the Filipino students. While I felt that the whole issue of Civil Rights movement became significant to most of the African-American students . . . that got a lot from their homes . . . reinforced the importance of people like Rosa Parks. And consequently I think those . . . the questions that they generated were . . . much more genuine or authentically important to the children.* (Examples of Mary's differentiated feedback to students based on their personal involvement are shown in Appendix B.)

What We can Learn From Mary's and Leslie's Stories for Teacher Education

Let's begin this concluding section with one more story, to bring full circle Leslie's initial teaching attention to recommended curriculum, then to her relationship with children, then to the broader context in which learning to teach is situated.

The Personal as Political

> *Five and one-half years with this conversational group has had a profound effect on my teaching and my views on education. More profound than I probably know because they have been with me my whole teaching career. I don't know what it would be like without them. . . . I remember supportive visits to my class, gentle questions and suggestions, hours of being able to unload my frustrations and fears without fear of judgment. Ironically, the biggest impact my conversational group had on me was pushing me out of the classroom. I began teaching five years ago, having come from a business career. I was well aware of the shortcomings of working within a bureaucracy. I was very clear on one point when I began*

teaching, if not on others. Focus on your work in the class. Don't worry about what happens around you. . . . By my third year, a number of our group were invited to deliver papers at the American Educational Research Association. This a group of educators who work mainly in universities on educational issues. It was a thrill to sit in on so many seminars. Real teachers rarely attended and seemed to be a novelty. The [university folk] seemed interested to meet me. But as time passed I began to get irritated and by the final day I was angry. These were people who changed the course of education and affected curriculum and practice. I had known nothing about them nor what they did. I had not known of their size nor their impact [on educational policy]. In spite of their power, few seemed to collaborate with teachers. Few seemed to have a true picture of what happens in a classroom, the impact of family life, of the diversity of the classroom and the challenges it presents. The picture I was presented in teacher training based on their research rarely matched the picture and critical issues I had found in the classroom. I couldn't sit there any longer. I clearly had been wrong about hibernating in the class. The push outside my room made me find my voice. It made me realize that I had made a commitment as an educator which meant that I had also made a commitment to many larger issues such as policy issues, curriculum issues, expenditure of funds, etc., which affect my students. It was a dramatic awakening.

The distanced and different stance of those who held power over Leslie's work was too threatening--once she became aware of it. She developed a sense of responsibility for educational relationships beyond the classroom.

This paper has been an attempt to highlight the spirals of relational knowing that were an important part of Leslie's and Mary's learning to teach. It was intended to detail their learning through the support of ongoing conversation, a passionate belief in themselves and their children as knowledge creators and evaluators, a willingness to create eclectic approaches to literacy characterized by relational integrity, and a propensity to look critically at both their children and themselves in relationship to evaluate the results. This focus was not intended to diminish the additional importance of their cognitive/logical knowledge of teaching and learning. Its purpose was to show dramatically how their own successes, and those of their children, rested in their relationships. When they found the disciplinary knowledge from their teacher education program important but insufficient for reaching the urban children they were charged to teach, Mary and Leslie reached out for relational support and knowing.

They discovered, by doing so, their freeing capacities for empirical knowledge creation and critique. Their own theoretical commitment to teach and succeed in this difficult environment, and their passion for these children, was both personal and political. Yet their teacher education

programs had given less value to personal, political, and relational knowledge than to cognitive. Given the human propensity to shape one's self as to be valued by the other (Noddings, 1984), the emphasis of the teacher education program had great power over these women's learning to teach. Prompted by their programs, they initially relied on externally formulated solutions to classroom problems rather than their own perceptions. Maxine Greene (1979) reminds us once again of the difficulty of developing a personal self when she quotes George Herbert Mead: "the attitudes of the others constitute the organized 'me,' and then one reacts toward that as an 'I'" (p. 24). That human condition, the personal and credentialing power that teacher education programs have over their students, and the reality of the need for new ways of thinking about urban schooling all call for greater sensitivity in relationships on the part of teacher educators.

We are sensitive to the thought that some readers of this narrative might have trouble locating themselves here. It is clear that there are multiple ways of relating to teaching that we have not addressed here. Our intention was focal rather than exclusionary. It was to validate the reality of these teachers' experiences--and others like them. There may also be charges of gender-specificity against this text. The point of telling the story from the perspective of two women, and to highlight relational knowing which is traditionally associated with women, was not to isolate it there. Other members of our conversational group were men who shared similar personal and political values. The ultimate goal of a feminist agenda is the degenderizing of every aspect of social life, so that traditionally genderized values can be claimed by women and men. Before that can occur, though, traditionally cast (and often devalued) women's values and interests must receive an equal public recognition (Ferguson, 1989). The personal, situational, and epistemological importance of such values must be acknowledged. Our stories which show the importance of relational knowing, then, have a political purpose.

Recommended Directions

Because of the growing national problem of school failure in urban areas and the propensity of new teachers without seniority to be assigned to the most difficult classes, the three of us agree with many teacher education theorists who are calling for a social-reconstructionist

purpose for teacher education reform (Beyer, 1988; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Maher & Rathbone, 1986; Sears, 1985; Smyth & Gitlin, 1989). With Liston and Zeichner, we believe that teacher education must take a political position for social equity if teachers are to be free to know all the ways they can reach children of every community. They must be free to challenge the very system that taught them. They must be free to develop a personal position for such work. The difficulty of such work, for all involved, cannot be minimized. It includes necessary changes in perceptions of many teacher educators.

> In the education of teachers probably no one factor is more important than the social attitude of the faculty of the professional institution. . . . Each staff member should be encouraged to know at first hand how the less-favored among us live and feel. . . . In every possible way, we must work for the more intelligently social outlook within our staff of our teacher-preparing institutions. Without this, we can hardly hope for socially prepared teachers. (Kilpatrick, cited in Liston & Zeichner, 1991, pp. 28-29)

As for the specificity of such a program, there are few features we would recommend. Merely clarifying the purpose of teacher education should help shape its content and process. A clearly stated social agenda, for example, would attract teacher candidates with clear political consciousness. The students themselves would then help create the curriculum. Based on Mary and Leslie's experiences, however, we would suggest attention to three issues within programs.

The first is a socially oriented pedagogical structure which promotes personal conversation around teacher-initiated issues and values. The teacher educator's purposes having been clarified at the outset of the program, teachers might form conversational groups around themes which support their current needs and interests. The teacher educator's expert knowledge would be presented in both a challenging and supportive manner as it related to teachers' issues. Such a process encouraged Mary and Leslie to believe in their own abilities and articulate and solve difficult problems in their own classrooms.

The second program feature would involve a commitment to inquiry. Not limited by focus or method, the goal of such inquiry would be to understand teaching and learning from personal, relational, intuitive, and political, as well as cognitive and empirical stances. Assuming a

perspective of teaching as research helped Leslie and Mary take and evaluate the needed risks to provide all children with the opportunities to become literate.

The final program feature would foster and celebrate teachers' passion and commitment to altering relations of domination and subordination through relational knowing. Most women who are sensitive to their own subordinate political position and the power of self-generated resistance can offer valuable personal experience to this process, as can many men. Elementary schoolteachers as a class can claim commitment to this process. Teacher educators, as members of college faculty who traditionally lack prestige, even when individual teacher education programs maintain high-quality programs and produce respectable research (see Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Schneider, 1987), can also contribute if they are willing to be vulnerable in relationship to their students. I can say, from personal experience, that the process and the progress are worth the risks.

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Appendix A-1

An example of Jarvin's work in response to hearing a story read, having the text in front of him, and attempting to answer some prediction questions. The first page shows his own writing. The second page was dictated to his teacher.

Five months later, after the story was reintroduced as part of the thematic study of winter, Jarvin wrote the third response independently.

THE MALE EMPEROR PENGUIN: A PRINCE AMONG DADS

By Linda McDaniel

Did you know that instead of sitting on a nest, the male emperor penguin holds his egg on his feet?

For two months, he is unable to eat or move around very much without running the risk of dropping the egg. All he can do is huddle with hundreds or even thousands of other male emperor penguins and try top keep warm.

What do you think the article will be about?

They sitd on the ice. But the pENGUiN can't

After eight to nine weeks, the penguins mate returns--just in time for the egg to hatch. Once the male hatches the egg, the chick moves to stand on its mother's feet, and she protects it with the fold of skin from her stomach. The mother feeds the chick with food stored in a compartment in her beak called a crop.

The male, who by now has become very thin and weak, is finally able to go back to the sea and eat his first meal in months!

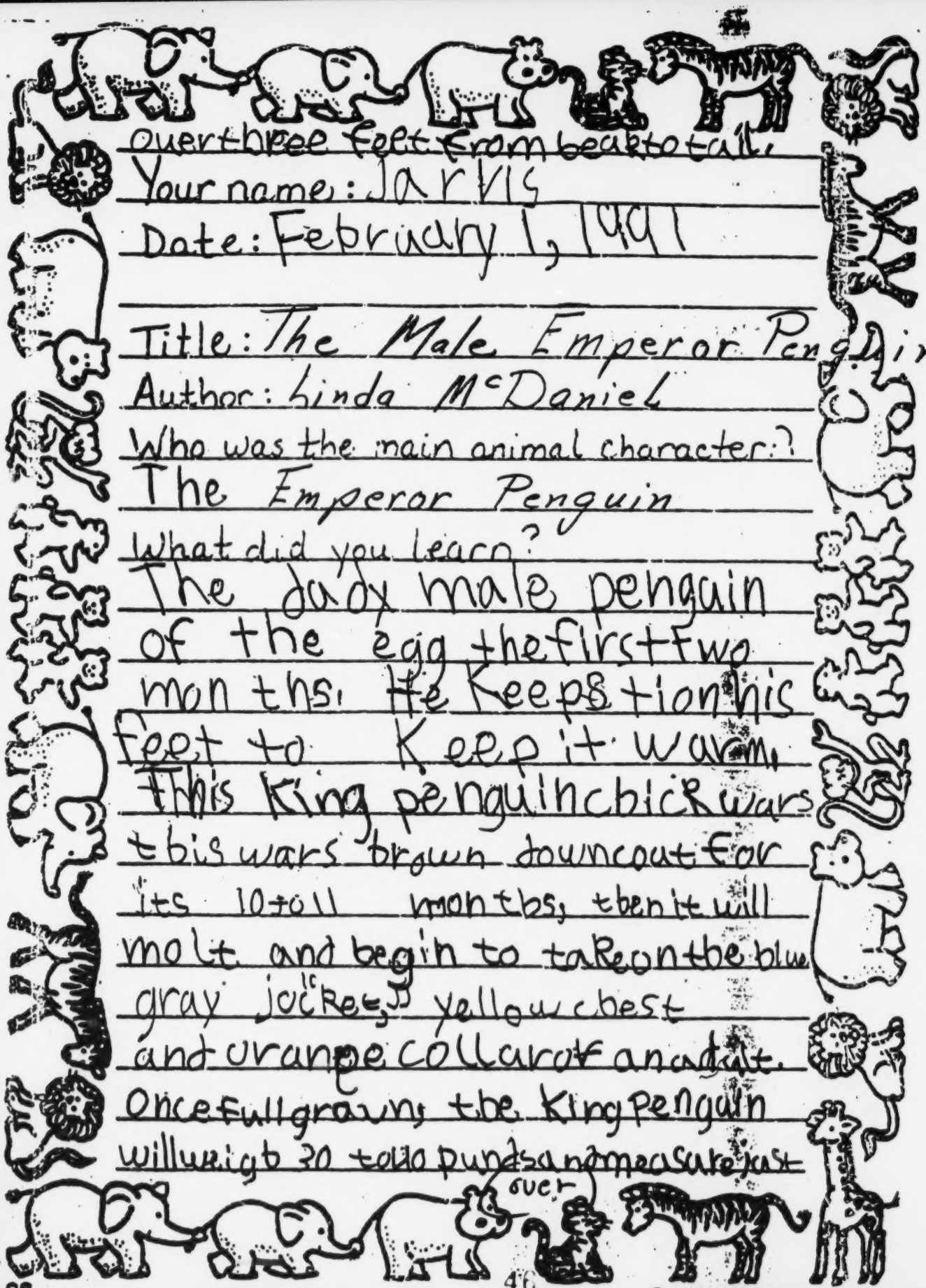
However, the male emperor penguin's job as a father is not over yet. After a couple of weeks of freedom to regain the weight he's lost, he returns to his responsibilities. For the next few weeks, he'll keep busy either holding the new chick on his feet or making the long trek to the sea to bring food for the chick.

After about a month and a half, the little emperor chick is able to stand on the ice by itself instead of standing on its parents' feet. By then it needs so much food that both parents must go back and forth to the sea constantly. Meanwhile, the chick waits with the other chicks in a large nursery called a **creche**.

What do you think will be described next?

The parents will come back and feed them. One chick might fall down and another will save him.

Jarvis (dictated)



Overthree feet from beak to tail.

Your name: Jarvis

Date: Febriuary 1, 1991

Title: The Male Emperor Penguin

Author: Linda McDaniel

Who was the main animal character?

The Emperor Penguin

What did you learn?

The dady male penguin of the egg the first two months. He Keeps tion his feet to Keep it warm. This King penguin chick wars this wars brown down coat for its 10 to 11 months, then it will molt and begin to take on the blue gray jacket, yellow chest and orange collar of an adult. Once full grown the King penguin will weigh 30 to 40 pounds and measure just over

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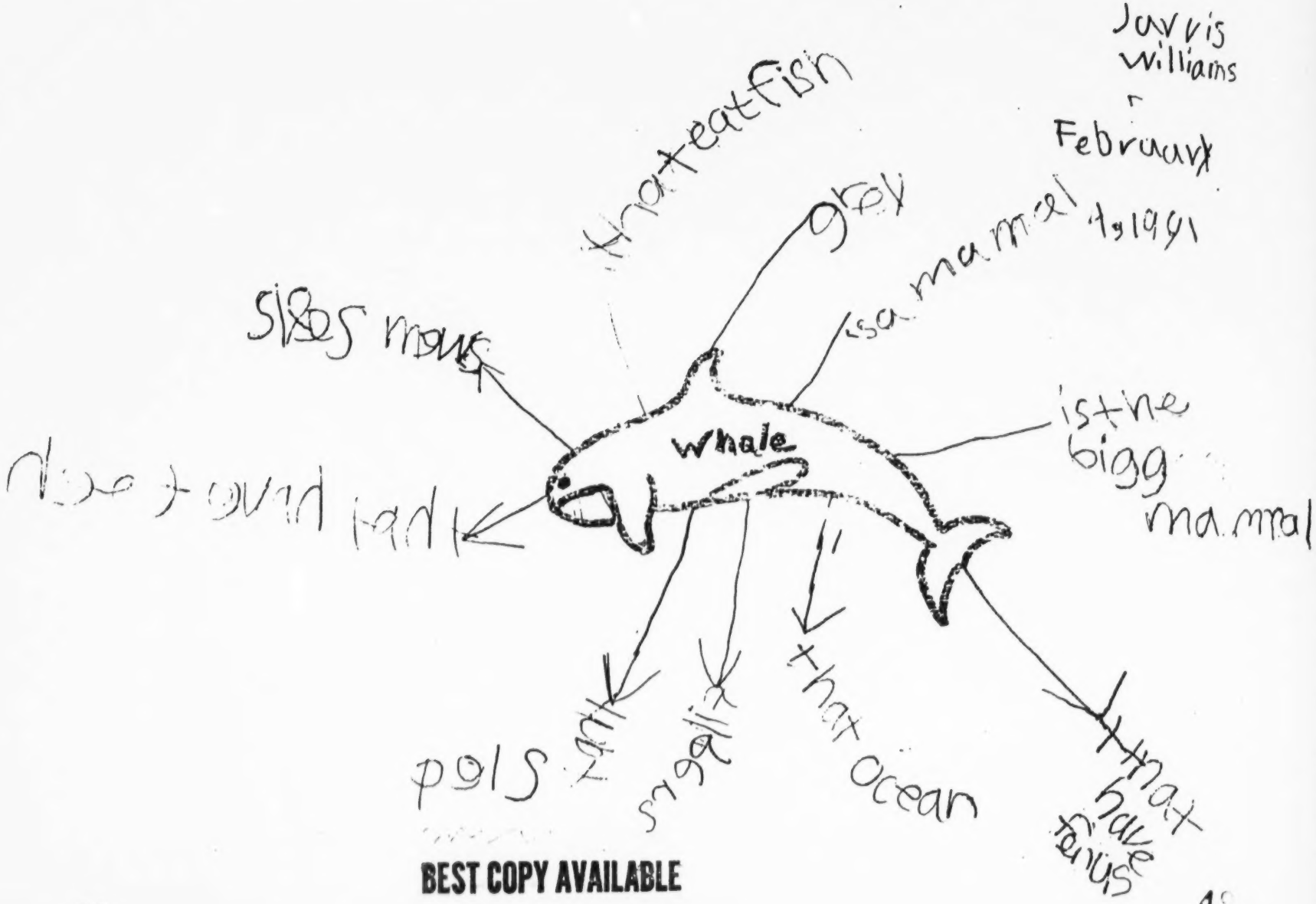
Appendix A-2

First is an example of Jarvin's pre-brainstorming about the study of whales. Next is the product he wrote with a partner at the end of their research project on the same topic.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Richard Trinette
Paquan Jarvis

Killer whales live in the cold waters of the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean. Hump back whals are often seen leping from the water this is called breach they look happy but humpbacks are alwas. Humpback whals have the langest flipper of any whals the gray whales are ugly female Narwhals do not have tusks Narwhals eat Fish and crustaceans. Polar baers are known to attack Narwhals Narwhals' tusks are made of ivory Narwhals maet are vary rich in vitamins. Narwhals size are up to 18 Feet Killer whals have powerful jaws and teeth Male Killer whals have very long dorsal Fins. Killer whals like coldwater blue whals do not have teeth there are many kinds of whales like the CALiFornia gray whale the blue whale and the Right whale and the gray Whale have baleen

the babby stays near her motherfor over a year be for the killer whale is the most dangerous of all. whales. the killer whale is the fastest swimer whales are mamles the bigist whale is the blue whale the Humpback ~~whale~~ Whale hav the bigist flipers the sekint bigist whale is the fin back whale the blue whale is aabot a hundrinds Feet long or ten EIEPHANTS or a blue whale is as big as one bus and a broky soist and one ELEPHANTS fish are called cold blooded but whales are warmblooded

Appendix A-3

This is an example of Jarvin's independent writing at the end of the school year.

The Important Book

by Jarvis Williams

The important thing about mamals is that they have live babies. They walk on four legs but not always. They have fur or hair, but sometimes it's hard to see. Mamals give their babies milk. Mamals have back bones and are warm blooded. But the important thing about mammals is that they have live babies

Independent Writing Project
June 1991

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Appendix B

This is an example of Mary's feedback to different forms of children's personal responses to their texts. The first two pages are Keena's "rap" on Rosa Parks, written with the help of her family.

Next is a Filipino students' letter to the author of the *Grandfather Stories*.

The last three pages show Mary's response to *The Great Cheese Conspiracy*. Notice how Mary's response is directed to their relational involvement with the text, not in terms of competitive literacy skills.

This is excellent work!

Keeyaana

Rosa Parks went to work one day,
She didn't mean to get in anybody's way.

She got on the bus one day after work,
and then here comes a big fat jerk.

"Hey Lady get up 'cause I want that seat,"

She say no uh unn, I need to rest my feet.

So they took her to jail, and in jail
She stayed,

and I know to God she must have prayed,

'Cause then came Martin to stand by her side.

And Martin decided, we shall not ride,

It was cold at first, then it got hot,

and everybody voted we have to boycott.

(5 N 0 N 2 N) 10

It was hard at first, the months came and went,

This was the start of our Civil .... Rights Movement

So lets learn this lesson and don't forget

Thanks to Miss Rosa we can now Sit

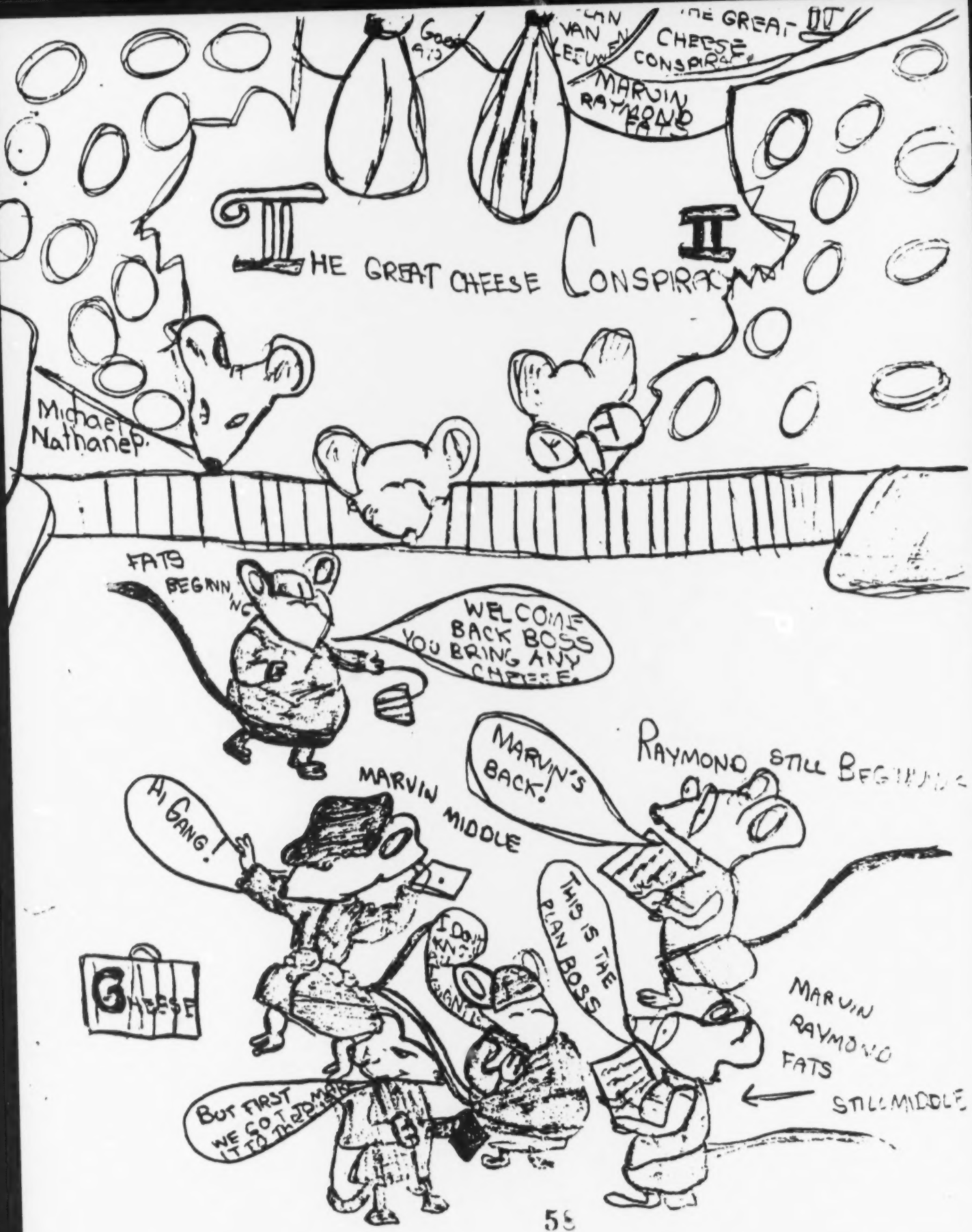
WORD to ya motha Peace

Dear Ms. Roland,

Your book was true,real,and nice. I should know because I am a filipino myself. Also Mr. Oben those pictures are true. And the pa where his Grandfather go back and forth my grandmother do that ans I do that too. For example I'm going to the Philippi in Christmas My Grandmother has a mansion and a bahay kubo. I got a question are you a filipino? Are you marri How old are you?

Sincerly,
John Luna

(A) Terrific
If you want to
mail this, lets
copy it on stationary


THE GREAT CHEESE CONSPIRACY II
Michael Nathanep
FATS BEGINNING
WELCOME BACK BOSS YOU BRING ANY CHEESE
MARVIN'S BACK!
RAYMOND STILL BEGINNING
MARVIN MIDDLE
HI GANG!
CHEESE
THIS IS THE PLAN BOSS
BUT FIRST WE GOTTA
MARVIN
RAYMOND
FATS
STILL MIDDLE

THE GREAT CHEESE CONSPIRACY Michael S. NATHAN

Marvin was underwater. Rat Conpone caused this Flood. He was at his wherehouse. Those dam rats think they could get the best of me Rat Conpone said happily. Raym and Fats ducked under water. Marvin swimmed over to Raymond and Fats Then Suddenly a drainpipe came. And it suck the rats right into the hole. The water threw the Conspiracy group right in a sewer. The rats fell on there bottom there was a paper in the sewer. But before they went Rat Conpone threw a note in the sewer. Raymond red the note it said I've got the secret plan if you want it back come to the Brooklyn Doc at midnight signed Rat Conpone. Marv check his watch it was 11.00 we only have one more hour said Marvin. Raymond made a airplane and they flew up and out of the sewer. It was 12:00 when the rats got to the doc. We going to beat those turkeys said Raymond, Rat Conpone came to the doc With three of his hench men. Marvin went against Rat Conpone. Raymond went against the third henchmen. And Fats went against the second henchmen. Marvin pushed Rat Conpone in the water Raymond punched the henchmen in the water. Fats bumped the henchmen in the water. We did it we won Fats cried. Then the rats got in the Cheese mobile and drove to the Cheese Barrel. Then they ran into Fat Cat. The three rats pulled out their watergiuns and shot the cat with water. They shot fat cat out the door. Then the rats drove back to the Bijou Theather.

NATHANIEL MICHAEL IMERO SEAN VAN LEE MARVIN RAYMOND FATS FAT CAT THE END

This is a very violent version of the story. I can tell you worked hard. (A)

THE GREAT CHEESE CONSPIRACY

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